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ABSTRACT

A course was developed to provide foreign student teaching assistants (TAs) with improved classroom presentational skills. Class size was kept small and classes were offered once each week for two hours to give students sufficient opportunities to practice speaking. Relying heavily on student oral presentations, the teachers assigned progressively more complex tasks that increasingly emphasized the use of audiovisual aids. The foreign students received feedback on their performance through written reactions from the instructors, oral and written evaluations from classmates, conferences with instructors about videotapes of student presentations, and self-evaluations. Student evaluations of the course gave the highest ratings to the enthusiasm and preparedness of the instructors, and the use of video feedback. The only frequently cited problems were lack of time and occasional misunderstandings between students and instructors. When evaluating their improvements, the TAs cited diminished nervousness and better organization most often, followed by using fewer notes, more audience contact, increased vocal control, and more fluent English. Of 21 students evaluated, the instructors' subjective estimates indicated dramatic improvement in 3 students, improvement in 15, and little or no improvement in 3. (An appendix contains an expanded course description, a course syllabus, the evaluation form used for oral presentations, and sample assignments.) (RL)

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THE FOREIGN TEACHING ASSISTANT IN THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY: A COURSE IN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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CIIC Program "Teaching in the Multicultural Classroom"

SCA Convention November 14, 1980

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In their textbook, An Introduction to Intercultural Communication, Condon and Yousef describe the small cultural differences that typically constitute the tourist's experiences abroad:

> *Suppose that you're planning to visit a part of the world about which you know very little--except that it is quite different from your own country. You are sophisticated enough to expect that the spoken language and probably some gestures will be different. You know, too, that customs will be different, but you are not exactly sure what this will mean. At least there will be interesting things to take pictures of or write home about. The climate and foods will be different, of course, but these differences are attractions and are not really problems.*[1]

But to the above scenario the authors of this paper add these conditions: Suppose that you are about to embark upon an extended visit to a foreign culture for the purpose of furthering your education. Not only are you expected to take graduate classes with the "natives" who speak the majority tongue in this culture, but you are expected to teach undergraduate "natives" in a basic course from your major area of study. You are not only expected to be scholastically able, but you are expected to be an effective communicator in the classroom even though the sea of faces you address does not share your cultural heritage, your native language, or your views on the nature of university education. Add to your anxieties about facing these "natives" the fact that on the first day of class, your only preparation for this intercultural encounter is a handbook from your departmental advisor entitled, "Tips for the Beginning TA."

This scenario too often typifies the experience of the international or foreign graduate student who serves as a teaching assistant at a U.S. college or university. This paper will report the efforts of one university

to begin to meet the communicative needs of foreign TAs who find themselves teaching U.S. undergraduates in basic courses. We will sketch the history and approach of an experimental course at the University of California at Davis--"Rhetoric 298: Teaching Practicum for Foreign Students"--which has attempted to enhance the classroom communicative skills of foreign TAs.

Intercultural Awareness and the Foreign Student

Since the pioneering work of anthropologist Edward T. Hall,[2] students of communication have become increasingly aware of the complex nature of intercultural encounters of all kinds.[3] Both U.S. diplomats[4] and U.S. business leaders[5] have been awakened to the importance of being able to accurately decode the symbol systems of a host culture in order to avoid gross misunderstanding. As we become more adept at engaging in what Clifford Geertz calls the "thick description" of cultural systems,[6] we will be less likely to gloss over significant differences between our culture and other cultures. Thus we can avoid the enthnocentrism of Edward Hall's typical American tourist who naively concludes that, "they are no different than the folks back home--they are just like I am."[7]

In few areas has the growing awareness of the significance of intercultural encounters been more dramatic than in education, specifically university study abroad. Although once an option available only to the wealthiest families, advances in communication and transportation as well as governmental support have made study abroad a reality for thousands of students throughout the world. While some writers have concentrated on the experiences of U.S. students in other cultures,[8] most recent research has examined the situation of the "sojourner" from another culture who comes to study in the United States.[9] This focus

on the cultural adjustment of foreign students to the U.S. appears appropriate as the U.S. has become a mecca for international students.

Currently foreign nationals comprise a student population of almost one quarter million on U.S. campuses,[10] and a significant number of these students are studying at the graduate level, especially in the engineering, life and natural sciences. Of these graduate students, some are selected to serve as research assistants or as teaching assistants in return for a stipend and/or tuition consideration.

Although the context of the foreign student teaching American undergraduates would appear to be a unique instance of intercultural encounter worthy of study, there is little evidence of formal investigation of this subject. As recently as 1976 the most comprehensive compendium of research on foreign students in the United States relegates the situation of the foreign TA in the U.S. classroom to the category, "For Future Research."[11]

The issue of formal training in teaching methods for TAs has been gaining support from all academic disciplines[12] and in the last two to three years a few universities have finally begun to experiment with practical training for foreign TAs. Courses with titles such as "Teaching Workshop"[13] and "Oral Communication for Foreign Students"[14] have appeared in English as a Second Language departments, some for mixed groups of graduate and undergraduate foreign students and a few for foreign TAs exclusively.[15,16] There has also been a report of at least one discipline-based training program for foreign TAs.[17] To our knowledge, Rhetoric 298 at UC Davis is the only course of its kind offered through a Rhetoric or Communications department. This distinction highlights the philosophical basis of the course, namely the belief that beyond a certain level of fluency, a foreign TA's key to

success lies in communication rather than merely linguistic skills. This attitude meets agreement from among instructors of the ESL and department-based courses, one of whom has noted that, "perfect oral English skills a good teacher do not necessarily make"[18] and another of whom concluded that, "the ability of a TA to communicate with freshmen mathematics students is quite different from the technical quality of the TA's spoken English."[19] The perspective that there is far more to effective classroom teaching than faultless English has been important in the design of the course to be elaborated here.

Elimination of pronunciation problems is a slow process normally requiring much more time than foreign graduate students feel they can afford in courses outside their major areas of study. While both common sense and research[20] point to the importance of a sound command of English for the foreign student in the U.S., the authors also believe that many other factors contribute to the success or failure of the foreign TA, and that these are amenable to coverage in a one quarter course. Examples of such factors include: nonverbal sensitivity, self concept, awareness of the structure of American education, and sensitivity to the dimensions of effective oral presentation.

What follows in condensed form is a report of the background, implementation, and evaluation of a course intended to provide foreign TAs with improved presentational skills in the classroom. This report will deal with some of the practical and theoretical concerns faced by instructors who are trying to develop a course which will enhance the communication skills of individuals who will be serving as teaching assistants in a foreign culture.

Course History and Development

The University of California, Davis awards 15% of its teaching assistantships to foreign students.[21] Approximately one quarter of the foreign TAs teach basic language courses, while the rest are spread among many departments (mostly sciences) with high concentrations in chemistry and engineering.

These graduate students fill their TA roles with varying degrees of success. While good foreign TAs are not a rarity, others encounter problems such as lack of familiarity with American teaching methods, weak language skills, lack of teaching experience under any system, and teaching to undergraduates who are unaccustomed to comprehending accented English. In addition, financial necessity requires some students to accept TAships before they have achieved sufficient language proficiency and become comfortable with the American university system.

On May 5, 1979, the Teaching Resources Center offered a pilot workshop on teaching for a small group of foreign students. Favorable reaction to this led to the establishment of Rhetoric 298, "Teaching Practicum for Foreign Students." The course was team-taught in Fall 1979-80 by both authors and instructed in Winter Quarter by Ms. Franck alone.

I. Course Structure

Rhetoric 298 is a 2-unit course which meets once a week for two hours and is graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. Enrollment is limited to 12 graduate students from various disciplines. The class is structured around three activities: performance, instruction and critique.

The "performance" aspect of the course consists of a series of

oral presentation assignments that are designed to be progressively longer and more difficult. During the first week of class students are asked to give brief introductions of each other from their seats. This task facilitates getting to know one another, allows students to venture their first spoken words in class, and gives the instructor an early opportunity to spot individuals who are misplaced in the course or who will need special help. During this same class period, the instructor demonstrates the videotaping procedure which will be used throughout the course by videotaping him or herself and playing the tape back for the class.

The second week, students are asked to give their first presentation in front of the class, but the topic is relatively informal ("teaching style in your home country") and the length requested is only 3 minutes. These talks are videotaped, and during succeeding days the students come to the instructor's office for the first of several individual playbacks with the instructor that are a key ingredient of the course.

In the next eight weeks of the course, oral presentations are required at almost every class meeting, and their length and complexity increase in a step-wise fashion. (Sample assignments are available in the Appendix.) After the second week, all topics are from areas in the student's own graduate discipline (e.g., "explain a concept from your field," or "justify why someone should study your discipline") and the length increases from 5 to 15 minutes. Students are asked to present their talks at a level appropriate to an intelligent audience untrained in their discipline, which in fact is a description of the class members themselves as an audience and of the undergraduates these students one day will teach.

An important ingredient in the progressively more complicated assignments is an increasingly heavy requirement for use of audio-visual aids. In the course of 10 weeks, students are expected to become comfortable with the use of the blackboard and to experiment with other materials such as handouts, overhead transparencies or slides. Visual material can be an excellent communication alternative to a speaker with accented English, and although students sometimes overdo media usage at first, by the time of their last talk most are working toward a choice of media that is appropriate and helps assure that their message is transmitted.

Throughout the course, the instructor presents material in the form of short lectures interspersed among the many student assignments. There is constant time pressure, and one cannot cover all one would wish. Lectures that have met with the greatest student appreciation are on: differences between preparing oral versus written material, how to organize, what to anticipate in American undergraduates' reaction to a foreign TA, how to use audio-visual materials, and how to deal with communication apprehension. In addition, generalized constructive criticism from the instructor after each round of talks is highly valued.

The students receive feedback on their performance from a number of sources: (1) their own perception of how the presentation went, (2) written reaction from the instructor, (3) oral and written evaluations from classmates, and (4) observation and discussion with the instructor of videotapes made of their presentations. Multiple sources of feedback reinforce the message and also provide variety, since each oral presentation is followed by one or more different kinds of critique. A unique and highly successful feature of the course is "American Audience Night"

when the students speak not in front of each other, but to an audience composed of undergraduate Rhetoric 1 (Public Speaking) students. This audience approximates the students foreign TAs instruct, and their critiques are perceived as particularly useful.

II. Composition of the Class

Extensive publicity was used to reach foreign graduate students directly and give them an opportunity to enroll. Most class members were enthusiastic volunteers, but a few came because advisors recommended or required it. Since the course was highly valued by all students, it appears that either means of entry is acceptable for the future.

A summary of the countries of origin and academic departments of the class members is presented in Table I. There were 11 students in fall and 10 in winter. Nine were from the College of Engineering, five from Letters and Science, five from Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and two from the School of Veterinary Medicine.

Table II compares the two classes in terms of length of time in the U.S. and TA status. The fall group had several new arrivals who were interested in teaching but had no promise of a TAship. More of the winter students were already committed to TAships at Davis.

III. Evaluation

Course Mechanics

To give students sufficient opportunity to practice speaking, class size must be kept small, and even then the two-hour class meeting cannot include all one would wish. More class meetings are not a solution, however, since it is difficult to recruit students for a course outside their home department if it entails a heavy workload. Therefore, it appears wise to offer such a course on a two-unit, once per week basis.

- TABLE I

Countries of Origin and Academic Departments of Graduate Students in Rhetoric 298, Fall & Winter 1979-80

Countries of Origin	Academic Departments
Taiwan - 8	Electrical & Computer Engineering - 5
Iran - 3	Chemistry - 3
Nigeria - 2	Civil Engineering - 3
Vietnam - 2	Entomology - 2
India - 1	Ag Engineering - 1
Chile - 1	Pharmacology & Toxicology - 1
Hong Kong - 1	Plant Physiology - 1
Spain - 1	Mathematics - 1
Greece - 1	Vegetable Crops - 1
U.S.A. (Puerto Rico) - 1	LAWR - 1
TOTAL = 21	Veterinary Microbiology - 1
	History - 1
	TOTAL = 21

- TABLE II

Length of U.S. Residency and TA Status of Rhetoric 298 Students.
Comparison of Fall & Winter Classes, 1979-80

Length of Time in U.S.	Fall	Winter
3 months or less	6	2
3 months - 1 year	0	4
1 or 2 years	2	2
more than 2 years	3	2
TOTAL =	11	10

TA Status	Fall	Winter
Current TAs	4	3*
Non TAs		
No TAship promised	7	2
New TAship promised for following quarter	0	4
Former TA; planning to TA again	0	1
TOTAL =	11	10

*one was a TA at California State University, Sacramento

Videofeedback

All the universities who have reported on courses for foreign TAs cite videofeedback as an essential component. A difference between our approach and others is the presence of the instructor at each playback. Since videofeedback is a new experience for most graduate students, the presence of the instructor/critic is essential for providing focus on problem areas and suggestions for improvement. The instructor helps the student become a more astute critic of his or her own performance.[22]

Video playbacks also permit the instructor to individualize his or her comments and thereby to reach students at their varying levels of skill and experience. Interestingly, many students were able to discern their own pronunciation errors. Correction, however, was very difficult, particularly in the context of a fast-moving oral presentation.

Student Evaluations

Rhetoric 298 students enjoyed the class and thought it worthwhile. Attendance was consistently good and course ratings were very high. The highest rated items in the course evaluation were (1) enthusiasm and preparedness of the instructors, and (2) the use of videofeedback. The only frequently cited problems were lack of time, and occasional instances of miscomprehension between students and instructors.

Did the students believe their presentations improved? In response to the questions, "Do you think you have progressed in giving oral presentations? If so, in what ways?" students cited diminished nervousness and better organization most often. Other improvements included using notes less, more audience contact, increased vocal control, and more fluent English.

One student commented,

"My ideas on teaching have been enriched, are broader and personally I feel much better prepared for teaching. .... I think they (my oral presentations) have (improved) although it is difficult for me to say to what extent. Anyway, I am confident they will (improve) more with the information I obtained in the course."

Evaluation by Instructors

The initial problem areas for most of the foreign students were

1. inexperience in organizing information for oral delivery,
2. lack of audience contact (nervousness, poor eye contact, inability to judge when listeners "got lost"),
3. inaccurate assessment of the audience's prior level of knowledge,
4. misunderstanding of questions, and
5. poor pronunciation and/or halting speech.

The methods used in Rhetoric 298 were effective in improving areas 1 - 4. Most of the students were sufficiently advanced in English so that such training (especially in ways to reinforce or complement speech with visual stimuli) could make a substantial difference in their achievement as TAs. The instructors' subjective estimate is that dramatic improvement was demonstrated in 3 students, improvement in 15, and little or no improvement in 3. Low levels of achievement were related to weak language skills at entry to the course.

There were two additional areas of improvement which are very important though virtually impossible to measure:

1. increased self-confidence, and
2. mechanism established for future learning.

Students reported diminished nervousness as a result of practice

speaking. This increased self-confidence should result in TAs who relate to American students in the more relaxed and informal manner characteristic of our educational system. A self-assured foreign TA will approach his or her job with enthusiasm that may create a cycle of success rather than of failure.

The second subtle change is increased awareness of what is involved in being a good teacher. Rhetoric 298 students learn to analyze presentations and to become critical evaluators of their own teachers. The TA who has learned to recognize effective methods can try them on his or her own students. Rhetoric 298 sets up a pattern for continuing learning that should, in turn, benefit the undergraduates who receive instruction from foreign TAs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The authors believe that Rhetoric 298 has been an effective course for enhancing the teaching/communicative skills of foreign TAs at UC Davis for the following reasons:

1. The course approaches classroom teaching as a communicative act, not simply as a linguistic act. Even though a foreign TA may speak with heavily accented English, he/she may become an effective teacher through careful monitoring of nonverbal cues from the student audience, through the use of purposeful redundancy and repetition in lectures, and by using complementary visual aids in oral presentations. The use of videofeedback sensitizes TAs to the roles of nonverbal management and organization in effective class presentations.
2. A wide variety of feedback sources and instruments is used in

order to provide the TA with a more accurate view of his/her classroom abilities. Students receive both oral and written feedback from instructors, self-critiquing and instructor criticism of videotaped presentations, and written responses from an audience of U.S. undergraduates.

3. The enrollment of Rhetoric 298 is multi-departmental rather than limited to one department or discipline as are many TA training programs. Although the eclectic composition of the class does make considerable demands on the listeners as attentive critics, the fact that the students are not in the same field makes the questions they ask of each other very similar to the inquiries a typical undergraduate student would make of his or her TA.
4. While almost all TA training programs fail to provide special services for non-native TAs, Rhetoric 298 acknowledges that the foreign TA faces special challenges in the classroom and deserves adequate preparation for the teaching experience. In Rhetoric 298 foreign students do not have to compete with U.S. TAs who would have obvious linguistic and experiential advantages.

   Instead the rich cultural mix of the class serves as a very supportive environment for the students. Students become both informed critics and friends in Rhetoric 298. Since research on student adjustment to American life points out that establishing friendships with other foreign students is an important factor in student success,[23] we believe that the supportive atmosphere of the class should not be undervalued.
5. While the authors would agree that it is important that any teacher eventually become familiar with the literature on educational philosophies and theories of learning, this course is

decidely pragmatic in its approach to teaching. Given the limited time available in the schedule of an overworked graduate student, such time is well spent in the practice of teaching. Micro-teaching demonstrating selected aspects of effective presentation such as the use of visual aids or approaches to student questions has been very beneficial in this course.

In their review of research on the adjustment of foreign students in the U.S., Spaulding and Flack note that more contact with Americans aids the foreign student in adjustment.

> *Many authors express concern that foreign student contacts with Americans should be more frequent and more meaningful. Among the suggestions are that participants in training programs should have more time for social activities and, if the sojourn is for two years or more, should live part of the time with an American family. On campus, foreign students should live in dorms with their American counterparts, and other ways should be found to increase communication between the two groups.*[24]

Few types of interpersonal contacts are as potentially rewarding as the contact between student and teacher. As foreign graduate students serving as TAs in American universities receive more adequate preparation for the communicative challenges of the classroom, they can begin to more fully participate in the richness of such an intercultural encounter.

FOOTNOTES

[1] John C. Condon and Fathi S. Yousef, An Introduction to Intercultural Communication (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), p. 33.

[2] Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language 1959 (Garden City: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1973); The Hidden Dimension 1966 (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1969).

[3] A very useful and concise discussion of important aspects of the intercultural encounter is found in Molefi K. Asante and Alene Barnes, "Demystification of the Intercultural Communication Encounter," in Molefi Kete Asante, Eileen Newmark, and Cecil A. Blake, eds., Handbook of Intercultural Communication (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979), pp. 95-104.

[4] See Robert T. Oliver, Culture and Communication (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1962); also Hall, The Silent Language and The Hidden Dimension.

[5] See Edward T. Hall and William Foote Whyte, "Intercultural Communication: A Guide to Men of Action," in Alfred G. Smith, ed., Communication and Culture: Readings in the Codes of Human Interaction (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), pp. 567-576; A recent example of a cross-cultural business study is Ke-Lu Chao and William I. Gorden, "Culture and Communication in the the Modern Japanese Corporate Organization," in Nemi C. Jain, ed., International and Intercultural Communication Annual V (Falls Church: SCA, 1979), pp. 23-36.

[6] Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), esp. pp. 3-16.

[7] Edward T. Hall, Beyond Culture (Garden City: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977), p. 63.

[8] L.S. Harms, Intercultural Communication (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 90-93.

[9] A wide range of articles has appeared recently which treats issues such as adjustment, integration, and the availability of support services for foreign students in the U.S.. For example, see Cigdim Kagitcibasi, "Cross-national Encounters: Turkish Students in the United States," International Journal of Intercultural Relations 2, (Summer 1978), 141-160; Sarla Sharma, "A Study to Identify and Analyze Adjustment Problems Experienced by Foreign Non-European Graduate Students Enrolled in Selected Universities in the State of North Carolina," California Journal of Educational Research 24, (May 1973), 135-146; Frances J. Pruitt, "The Adaptation of African Students to American Society," International Journal of Intercultural Relations 2, (Spring 1978), 90-118.

[10] Institute of International Education Statistics cited in The Chronicle of Higher Education, April 23, 1979, p. 11.

[11] Seth Spaulding and Michael Flack, The World's Students in the United States: A Review and Evaluation of Research on Foreign Students (New York: Praeger, 1976), p. 166.

[12] Jeanette R. Szymanski, "Training the Foreign Language Teaching Assistant," Improving College and University Teaching 26, (Winter 1978), 71-73; Melton E. Golmon, "A Teaching Seminar for Graduate Teaching Assistants in Zoology," American Biology Teacher 37 (April 1975), 231-233; Malcolm M. Renfrew and Therald Moeller, "The Training of Teaching Assistants in Chemistry: A Survey," Journal of Chemical Education 55, (June 1978), 386-388; Claire P. Gilbert and James F. McArthur, "In-Service Teacher Preparation of French Graduate Assistants: Design and Evaluation," French Review 48, (February 1975), 508-521.

[13] Jackie Hoeppner, "Final Report: ESL Teaching Workshop 1977-78." Unpublished paper. University of California, Berkeley, 1978.

[14] Frances B. Hinofotis and Kathleen M. Bailey, "Course Development: Oral Communication for Advanced University ESL Students." Workpapers in Teaching English as a Second Language, 12 (June 1978) pp. 7-19.

[15] Mark Landa and William Perry, "Classroom Communication for Foreign TAs." National Association for Foreign Student Affairs Newsletter 31 (6); pp. 145, 147 (March 1980).

[16] Donna Steed Rice, "A Description of a Model Program for Orienting the New Foreign Teaching Assistant." State University of New York at Buffalo. In press, 1979.

[17] Suzanne Damarin and Gregory West, "Preparation of Foreign Graduate Students to Teach Mathematics: An Experimental Course," American Mathematical Monthly 86, (June/July 1979), pp. 494-497.

[18] Rice, p. 8.

[19] Damarin and West, p. 496.

[20] Sharma, p. 145-146.

[21] Data from a recent UC Davis Graduate Division study which found that in Fall 1979, 86 out of 554 TAships (16%) were awarded to foreign students.

[22] Frances F. Fuller and Brad A. Manning, "Self-confrontation Reviewed." Review of Educational Research, 43 (1973) pp. 469-528.

[23] Spaulding and Flack, p. 74.

[24] Ibid, p. 77.

APPENDIX: COURSE MATERIALS

page A1	Expanded Course Description
pages A2-A4	Course Syllabus
page A5	Evaluation Form for Oral Presentations
pages A6-A10	Sample Assignments

ANNOUNCEMENT

RHETORIC 298

Expanded Course Description

Title: Teaching Practicum for Foreign Students

Units: 2

Prerequisite: Moderately fluent English

Grading: Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory

Time: Mondays, 7 - 9 p.m.

Objectives: The student will be able to:

- prepare and present a talk on a topic about which he or she is well-informed
- respond to questions from an audience following a talk
- critique his or her own presentations
- describe attributes of American classroom instruction, particularly those relating to his or her own graduate department (e.g., attitude towards grading, class participation).

Description: In a series of ten 2-hour class meetings students will deliver oral presentations on subjects related to their disciplines. These will be videotaped for purposes of later self-evaluation and improvement.

Topics to be covered in reading, in lectures by the instructors and in guest speeches by experienced foreign TA's include: procedures for the first day of class, lecturing techniques, encouraging class participation, levels of formality/informality and dealing with student questions.

Pronunciation problems will be identified and discussed with students during videofeedback sessions, and efforts toward correction will be initiated.

Maximum Number of Students: 12

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION contact:

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or

Michael De Sousa, Rhetoric Department 752-0615

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A2

SYLLABUS

RHETORIC 298: Teaching Practicum for Foreign Students — Fall 1980

Mondays 3:10 - 5:00 p.m., 101 Olson Hall

Instructor: Marion Franck
Office: Teaching Resources Center, 17 Wellman Hall
Telephone: 752-6050 (Home 758-3319)
Office Hours: By appointment at 752-6050

Course Overview:

As students coming to this university from various other countries, it is clear that all of you are talented scholars and researchers in your respective fields. My objective in this course is to provide you with practical experience in the organization and oral presentation of subject matter in your major discipline. It is my hope that this course will aid you in preparation for successful classroom teaching.

At the outset it is probably useful to establish the ground rules for this course. First of all, this is not the usual graduate-level course complete with exams and lengthy research work. It is a performance course in the sense that you will be asked to develop and present various teaching exercises which will provide background for your teaching in the university. The course is graded S/U and requires your completion of the following responsibilities:

1. attendance and participation as a thoughtful respondent and critic for class presentations;

2. completion of assigned oral and written exercises, including a final 15-minute lecture presentation;

3. attendance at playback of 3 of your own videotaped presentations (to be scheduled with the instructor); and

4. completion of assigned readings from the required text, Wilbert McKeachie, Teaching Tips: A Guidebook for the Beginning College Teacher, as well as reading materials that will be handed out in class.

The small size of this class should allow for getting to know each other. I hope you will see your role as students here as not only to take personal profit from the course but also to help the other students by being a supportive and helpful critic of their presentations. I, too, would appreciate your opinions and suggestions. Since we are a diverse group, there will be a great deal we can learn from each other, and I anticipate that this will be a stimulating educational experience for all of us.

Rhetoric 298 Fall 1980

Texts: Wilbert J. McKeachie, Teaching Tips: A Guidebook for the Beginning College Teacher
T.A. Handbook, Teaching Resources Center, UCD

SYLLABUS

October 6

Introductions; Syllabus

October 13

Assignment due:
(1) Reading. McKeachie, Ch. 3 "Meeting a Class for the First Time"
Ericksen (handout: "The First Day of Class")
(2) Prepare a 3-minute talk describing teaching style in your country

Topic: Teaching styles, here and in other countries
The first day of class

October 20

Assignment due:
(1) Reading. Eble (handout: "The Lecture as Discourse")
T.A. Handbook: "Lecturing" pp. 15-18
(2) View your videotape

Topic: Lecturing

October 27

Assignment due:
(1) Reading. Gronbeck (handout: "Defining")
(2) Prepare a 5-minute talk defining a term or concept from your field.

Class: Student 5-minute talks & critique

November 3

Assignment due:
(1) Reading. McKeachie, Ch. 16 "Examinations"
Ch. 17 "The ABC's of Assigning Grades"
(2) View your videotape.

Class: Testing & grading. Use of instructional aids.

continued.....

November 10

Assignment due:
(1) Interview an experienced TA from your department. Or observe a class taught by an experienced TA from your department. Write a 2-page report on your observations.
(2) Prepare a 7-minute talk using instructional aids.

Class: practice for American Audience Day

November 17

Assignment due:
Final preparation of 7-minute talk for American Audience Day

Class: American Audience Day

November 24

Assignment due:
Reading. McKeachie, Ch. 5 "Organizing Effective Discussion" pp. 35-50 only
T.A. Handbook. "The Discussion Section" "Discussion Strategies" pp. 20-25
View your videotape.

Class: Discussion leading.

December 1

Assignment due:
Final presentation. 15-minute lecture on a topic from your field. (One half of the class will speak this day, and one half next week. Attendance by everyone is required on both days.)

Class: Student final lectures

December 8

Assignment due:
Same as last week.

Class: Student final lectures

Final Examination date and details to be announced later.

EVALUATION FORM FOR ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Please feel free to use any and all of the questions below to guide your feedback.

Speaker _____ **Subject** _____

ORGANIZATION

objectives clear?
major points explicit?
introduction/preview?
repetition/summary?
potential for student feedback?

DELIVERY/PRESENTATION

audience contact?
appropriate use of notes?
voice clarity & volume?
energy level?
rate/pace?
nonverbal communication?
appropriateness of language?

USE OF SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

use of blackboard?
audio-visual aids as appropriate?
charts, graphs, handouts, etc.?

CONCLUSION

purpose fulfilled?
overall effect?

MF:nb

Rhetoric 298 - Assignment for Week Two

Your oral presentation assignment for next week is a 3-minute talk about teaching style in your home country. It is impossible to describe everything in such a short time, so choose a limited area to discuss.

Some possible topics are:

(1) use of lecture versus discussion

(2) formality/informality of student-teacher relationship

(3) testing and grading practices

(4) student attitudes toward learning or toward their teachers

(5) duties of teaching assistants

(6) use of audiovisual materials

(7) techniques of lecturing

(8) special problems in teaching your discipline

(9) university conditions that influence teacher behavior.

Note: It would be most useful for you to discuss university teaching, but you may talk about grade or high school if you prefer.

MRP 10/6/80

A7

Assignment for Week 4

The assignment for next week, January 28th, is a five-minute "definition" talk. You are to choose a TERM or CONCEPT from your field and, in five minutes, explain it to our class.

For example, a student in political science might explain the term "Propaganda," distinguishing it from other forms of communication and giving examples. A student in nutrition might explain what "Vitamin C" is and briefly describe its utility to the human body.

This talk will mark the beginning of our practice in using instructional aids. We will experiment with more complicated equipment later, but this time please limit yourself to the most common instructional aid: the blackboard. Use it at least once in your presentation.

Since we will devote the entire 2-hour period next week to these talks, there will be time for 1 or 2 questions from the group after your talk. In addition, there will be a brief evaluative discussion after each talk. You will be expected to listen attentively to your classmates' talks and comment constructively on them.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The "audience" in our class is much like the audience when you are a teacher of undergraduates. We are a group of intelligent individuals who may know very little about your field. Please aim your talk at us, not at other experts in your field.

MF:nb

Two page Written Assignment for Week 6

In an effort to increase your (and our) knowledge of some of the practices regarding being a T.A. in your department, we ask that you respond in brief written form to either one of the following two exercises:

1. Interview an experienced T.A. from your department in an effort to learn more about what a T.A. actually does. Potential topics for the interview might include:

   Major duties of the T.A. in your department
   Greatest demands of the job/Easiest part of the job
   How the T.A. plans and organizes lectures or discussion groups
   Use of office hours
   Interaction/cooperation among T.A.'s in the department
   How language problems/accents are handled
   Socializing with students
   How does the T.A. perceive American undergraduate students?
   Relationship of T.A. with full-time teaching faculty
   How did the T.A. "learn how to teach"?
   How to encourage student feedback and questions

   Granted, these topics are only offered as suggestions. Select the issues that are of greatest interest to you.

2. Observe a class taught by an experienced T.A. in your department or a related department. Without using the name of the T.A. in your written report, evaluate the T.A.'s classroom teaching. Base your evaluation on some of the teaching factors we have discussed in class: lecture or discussion style, voice and language, clarity and organization of class materials, evidence of the objectives for the class, role of student feedback in the class, use of teaching aids, visual aids, etc. In short, try to use your increasing critical abilities to evaluate the class. If it is a lecture class you may want to use the Lecture Feedback Form as a guide for your comments.

MF:nb

ORAL PRESENTATION for weeks 6 & 7

Practice Session: Monday, November 10

American Audience Day: Monday, November 17

DATES DUE

Your next assignment will be presented twice, once in a practice session next Monday when you will receive suggestions for improvement from your peers, and once for an American Undergraduate Audience on November 17.

LENGTH OF TALK

7 minutes preferred; 10 minutes maximum. You will be allowed 5 minutes for questions.

MODE OF TALK

You may give a conventional lecture or experiment with interaction with the class.

AUDIO-VISUAL REQUIREMENT

For non-native speakers of English, practice with modes of communication other than speech are important. Therefore, I want you to use at least one audio-visual aid in your presentation. It may be the blackboard, but I recommend that you take this opportunity to experiment with one of the other techniques discussed in class. If you need equipment such as an overhead projector or a slide projector, you may pick it up at the Audio-Visual Center in Walker Annex.

TOPIC

The topic may be anything from your discipline that would be of interest to a group of mixed undergraduates.

One possibility that has been successful in the past is the following:

> Briefly define your discipline for a group of hypothetical undergraduate students who are in your class for the first time. Respond to the question, "What is _____?" (genetics, agricultural engineering, chemistry, computing science, etc.).
>
> Provide justification for the study of this discipline, explain the uses, application, importance or relevance of this discipline to the world today. In this sense you are responding to the question, "Why would anyone want to study _____?"

MP:nb

FINAL PROJECT: Weeks 9 & 10

The final project for Rhetoric 298 is a 15-minute talk. Half of you will speak on November 26 and half on December 3. You are all expected to attend class on both days.

This will be an opportunity for you to demonstrate your increasing understanding of the elements of effective oral presentation; use of notes, audience contact, clear structure, role of feedback, language and terminology adapted to audience, use of illustrative aids, pace, and enthusiasm for the subject.

Prepare a talk that has the following elements:

- a clear and motivating introduction of the topic
- an explanation of something from your discipline (a concept, a process, a demonstration, new areas of research in your field, controversial issues in your field)
- a concise conclusion
- use of visual aids is optional.

If possible, choose a topic that you would speak about if you became a TA in your department. Aim your talk at a general audience of intelligent students who are not familiar with your field. It would be a good idea to choose a topic that you might discuss in the first week of a course entitled, "Introduction to (your field)".

We will have to be very strict about the 15-minute limit in order to give everyone equal time to speak. If you want to allow for a question and answer period, you must stop your talk before 15 minutes is up.

If you would like help in planning your talk, you may make an appointment to meet with Mike or Marion. Come prepared with a tentative outline.

MF/MD/nb 11-2-79